



SUSTAINABLE UTOPIA

- AN IDEOLOGY FOUNDED ON
PERSONAL FREEDOM AND SOCIAL
RESPONSIBILITY GIVES BOTH
INDIVIDUALS AND THE ECONOMY
THE GREATEST POSSIBLE SCOPE
TO DEVELOP -

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IN THE 2012 TREND REPORT, WE EXPLAINED THAT THE PROJECT ECONOMY WOULD LEAD PEOPLE TO TAKE A PROACTIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD LIFE AND IMPACTING THE WORLD AROUND THEM. WE DISCUSSED THE DETERMINATION PEOPLE WOULD SHOW TO CHANGE THEIR LIFESTYLES, ADOPTING MORE SUSTAINABLE, LONG-TERM APPROACH TO LIFE (SEE [MAKING MEANING TREND](#)).

In the Reinvention Era people will realise that, beyond their personal determination, they have the power to change the world around them and create new systems thanks to digital technology. These new systems will be based on timeless values of collaboration, fairness, and sustainability. To realise this change, people and organisations will need to transform and reinvent their culture. Kindheartedness will drive actions and people will become modern utopians: individuals who feel empowered to build a sustainable utopia for themselves and the community. A sustainable utopia is a realistic, achievable vision of what society could become. Utopians, after all, believe it is possible to achieve collective success. So far in human history we have never been able to scale an equal distribution of societal benefits; an enormous and growing divide remains between the haves and have-nots. But the digital divide is shrinking: 24 billion connected devices are expected to be in use by 2020¹, many of which will be owned by people in China and India. Thanks to the spread of affordable technology (see Case Studies), more people are aware of the imbalance in the world and less are willing to ignore it. According to Shaun King, founder of HopeMob (see Case Studies): “People that previously had no idea of the difference they could make in the world have been emboldened by social media and are now aware of issues and needs and ways that they can provide solutions to them that just didn’t exist decades ago².” This awareness is increasing pressure on businesses and governments to work toward equality, and empowering people work for change. The transparency that comes with such widespread information access also builds empathy. Modern utopians are focusing their attention on specific areas where they

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most want to have a positive impact and find solutions to problems. They take a proactive approach, investing their own resources through time-banking, volunteering, or social enterprise. Modern utopians will harness digital tools to reinvent systems and improve society. Transparency will be essential as a way to track and measure impact. They will be “repats”, “rurbans”, “living prototypes”, active citizens, movement entrepreneurs, and generally kindhearted people. They will embrace a bottom-up approach to create a society that operates harmoniously and equitably.

GIVING BACK AND CREATING SUSTAINABLE IMPACT.

People are increasingly concerned about their contribution to the world. The question “How will you measure your life?” is taking on more importance, and with it, people’s desire to create a lasting legacy. Modern utopians are concerned about giving something back.

In a world that is more digital and globalised by the day, people seek the feeling of belonging somewhere. Migration will take a new turn and we will witness waves of expats returning to their home countries. This will happen partly because of the economic downturn of Western countries in contrast with the economic growth of some emerging markets, and partly because of people’s desire to create a positive impact in their home countries. Governments in many emerging countries will create initiatives to bring back their expats. Repats – people who return to their country of birth, citizenship, or origin – will use the knowledge and skills acquired during their time abroad to have a positive impact in their own countries. These modern utopians will be motivated by kindheartedness and will share their knowledge to create tangible change. For example, former Microsoft employee Patrick Awuah founded Ashesi University (see People). A native of Ghana, Awuah believes that what Africa needs most is leadership. His goal is to train a new generation of ethical and entrepreneurial business leaders who can become an engine of growth for Ghana. Indeed, modern utopians will look for ways to help improve their culture by nurturing local geniuses in a bid to promote knowledge and develop

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local economies. As a result, we will witness the rise of movement entrepreneurs (see Additional Insights) emerging from developing countries. They are a new breed of entrepreneurs who now have knowledge and inexpensive tools to address social issues. These socially driven change-makers are finding increasing support, as the issues they are tackling can often be aggregated and applied to other contexts. The Global Diaspora Forum, for example, launched a new business competition in Latin America this year (see Additional Insights) to encourage diaspora groups in the United States to “give back” to their countries of origin. Providing people with means to expand their influence in order to address their circles of concern is more powerful than a top-down approach³.

In the same way, modern utopians aspire to live a more balanced life, tending more toward kindness to other people, the community, and the planet. As a result, we will notice reverse migration whereby city-dwellers move to the countryside. This rural phenomenon will happen in many countries where technology enables people to connect from a rural context. Modern utopians will use digital technology to work remotely and stay connected to their networks. Their technology choices will be motivated by function, and we will witness an increase of interest for the “minimite” lifestyle (see Additional Insight); minimites live with the least amount of technology to accomplish what they need.

The rural lifestyle will bring an injection of fresh talent to microcommunities. In Spain, towns of fewer than 1000 inhabitants are growing while cities of over 100,000 have stopped⁴. The modern utopians “healthy life philosophy” will encourage people to nurture their community and develop their local economy. They will positively impact the less privileged groups who have moved to the countryside based on expensive living costs and unemployment in bigger cities. The modern utopians will open up new possibilities for the micro-economies in a bid to contribute to a fairer society.

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CREATING KINDER SYSTEMS AND COMMUNITIES

Modern utopians understand the importance of proactively designing the future, connecting people's needs with available resources to cooperatively create new systems that are kinder to people. They adopt a bottom-up approach (see Additional Insights), focused on fostering long-term solutions through common action. Small and nimble change is often what will characterise sustainable utopia projects, as borders are a necessary part of smooth and equitable society – at least at first. These utopians are happy to become living prototypes that experiment with new systems of living. They change and reinvent cultures as they increasingly understand their place and power within the culture cycle (see Additional Insights). They will strive to perpetuate new cultures by engaging with people who share the same values and goals for a sustainable utopia. A current example is the Seasteading Institute, which advocates for the creation of floating cities to be used for incubating controlled society experiments (see Case Studies). The Reinvention Era will be characterised by the rise of experimental sustainable utopia initiatives created by individuals and groups that harness digital technology to transform microscale movements into global change. Successful societies will spread by sharing best practices and experiences across communities. Cities will become experimental labs for new societal systems. In the future, city-states will have an advantage over nations due to the ability to foster collaboration; cities can more easily create networks for exchanging and transferring knowledge. New urban, globally linked geopolitical models will appear, particular to each city. This will lead to a growing number of people who truly feel like global citizens. For many years, the concept of collaboration with “sister cities” (see Additional Insights) has been fostering sociocultural exchange between cities. Dating as far back as 836 in France, these villes jumelées are now taking a more local approach. Neighborland, a New Orleans-based social network aims to improve living conditions in neighbourhoods across the US. Their motto, “a healthy neighbourhood is a connected neighbourhood”, emphasises the importance of collaboration, knowledge transfer, and citizen participation, all of which are facilitated by digital technology. Cities will become sustainable development labs where modern utopians are able to experiment with ideas for the next generation of governance. Governments are already taking note, as demonstrated by Iceland's crowdsourced constitution, up for vote in Spring of 2013. Iceland's government gathered

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ideas through an online feedback loop between government and citizens, taking advantage of Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube technologies. This is a great example of a country encouraging and enabling active participation from citizens, who are given the power to design the future they want for themselves. Measuring the positive impact of such initiatives on the well-being of citizens will be key to ensuring global adoption. Measures such as PERMA or the Happiness Index (see Additional Insights) can help achieve this; with many other countries requiring major social change, these initiatives are a great way for nations to demonstrate kindheartedness instead of self-interest. The challenge will be ensuring that modern utopians are armed with the necessary knowledge to participate. For sustainable utopias to become a reality and fundamentally change society, the divide between knowledge haves and have-nots must disappear. Digital technology will be the core enabler for creating sustainable utopias, as it will create transparent and collaborative ways for people and organisations to improve society as whole.

1. GSMA Connected Life report: <http://www.gsma.com/connectedliving/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/How-the-Connected-Life-Drives-Revenue-GSMA.pdf>
2. <http://www.fastcoexist.com/1680994/how-social-media-has-changed-how-we-give>
3. Stephen Covey's The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People (1989)
4. Minder, Raphael, The Country Beckons Spaniards as Jobs in Cities Grow Scarce, The New York Times, September 12, 2012.



ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

PERMA is a comprehensive index of well-being that allows for combining objective and subjective indicators, developed by Martin Seligman (director of the Positive Psychology Center, University of Pennsylvania). PERMA is an acronym for Positive emotion, Engagement, positive Relationships, Meaning and purpose, and Accomplishment. PERMA can index the well-being of individuals, of corporations, and of cities. Seligman argues that if we want global well-being, we should also measure and try to build PERMA.

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HAPPINESS INDEX is an annual report that describes and analyses studies on happiness and life satisfaction in over 200 countries. Iceland, New Zealand, and Denmark are at the top of the happiness index list, while Bulgaria, Moldova, and Zimbabwe rank at the bottom. The countries with the highest life satisfaction are Costa Rica, Puerto Rico, and Denmark (between

85 and 87%), compared to Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and Ukraine that fall to 38-40%.

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FORGIVENESS, according to new evidence in the medical community, is good for our health in myriad ways: it lowers blood pressure, improves sleep, and increases lifespan. More and more studies support the theory that kindness can be a powerful healing tool, both psychologically and physiologically. Forgiveness and kindheartedness might even be able to rid us of the need for medications altogether.

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MOVEMENT ENTREPRENEURS are a new breed of entrepreneurs who use mobile and internet platforms to aggregate and organise action. We are entering an era of global movements, many of which will emerge in the

global South, where individuals have had little say over the conduct of their governments and corporations. New technologies offer ways to address these issues through easy cross-border information exchange, which has enormous potential for political change. In time, the global mobilisation of consumers and citizens may create a countervailing power to global businesses that, until now, have been accountable only to national governments.

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THINK BOTTOM UP, NOT TOP DOWN, argues Michael Shermer, author of *The Believing Brain: From Ghosts and Gods to Politics and Conspiracies—How We Construct Beliefs and Reinforce them as Truth*. He believes that almost everything important that happens in both nature and society happens from the bottom up, not the top down. One way to get people to adopt a bottom-up shorthand abstraction as a cognitive tool is to find examples that we know evolved from the bottom up; language and knowledge production are

such examples. Shermer argues that the Internet is the ultimate bottom-up, self-organised, emergent property of millions of computer users exchanging data across servers. And although there are some top-down controls involved, the strength of digital freedom derives from the fact that no one is in charge.

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THE CULTURE CYCLE describes how culture works, but also prescribes how to make lasting change. The Culture Cycle is the iterative, recursive process whereby people create cultures to which they later adapt, and cultures that shape people so that they act in ways that perpetuate the cultures. This process involves four nested levels: individual selves (one's thoughts, feelings, and actions), the everyday practices and artefacts (education, law, media) that afford or discourage those everyday practices and artifacts, and pervasive ideas about what is good, right, and human that both influence and are influenced by all four levels. The Culture Cycle rolls for all types of social distinctions, from the macro (nation, race, ethnicity, region, religion, gender, social class, generation, etc.) to the micro (occupation, organisation, neighbourhood, hobby, genre preference, family, etc.). Humans are culturally shaped shapers. Built into the Culture Cycle are the instructions for how to reverse engineer it: a sustainable change at

one level usually requires a change at all four levels.
(HAZEL ROSE MARKUS AND ALANA CONNER)

PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY is a process emphasising the broad participation of constituents in the direction and operation of political systems. Participatory democracy tends to advocate more involved forms of citizen participation than traditional representative democracy. It strives to create opportunities for all members of a population to make meaningful contributions to decision-making, and seeks to broaden the range of people who have access to such opportunities. Since so much information must be gathered for the overall decision-making process to succeed, technology may provide important forces leading to the type of empowerment needed for participatory models, especially those technological tools that enable community narratives and correspond to the accretion of knowledge. As an example, the 2011 **OCCUPY MOVEMENT** generated considerable grassroots interest in participatory democracy.

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THE 2012 GLOBAL DIASPORA FORUM,

powered by the International diaspora Engagement Alliance (IdEA), focuses on how new technology can empower and increase diaspora philanthropy, social entrepreneurship, volunteerism, and social innovation. In honour of this event, IdEA launched a partnership with GlobalGiving as a way to promote philanthropy among diaspora communities. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced the launch of a new business competition for Latin America. The competition aims to encourage diaspora groups in the United States to "give back" to their countries of origin, in line with the theme of this year's Global Diaspora Forum. Interested applicants will have a chance to win grant funding to get their business ideas off the ground. They will be provided with a range of resources – from counselling to networking with international buyers and sellers – to develop their business concepts. The public will have a chance to vote for their favourite business plans online. Participants will also have a chance to share their ideas through different social media networks.

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PONYRIDE is a study to see how the foreclosure crisis can have a positive impact on our communities. Using an "all boats rise with the tide" rent subsidy, they are able to provide cheap space for socially conscious artists and entrepreneurs to work and share knowledge,



resources, and networks.

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SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL is a **NON-PROFIT** citizen diplomacy network that creates and strengthens partnerships between United States and international communities. More than 2,000 cities, states, and counties are partnered in 136 countries around the world. The organisation “strives to build global cooperation at the municipal level, promote cultural understanding and stimulate economic development”. As the official organisation which links jurisdictions from the US with communities worldwide, Sister Cities International recognises, registers, and coordinates sister cities, counties, municipalities, oblasts, prefectures, provinces, regions, states, towns, and villages. The US sister city program originated in 1956 when **PRESIDENT DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER** proposed a people-to-people citizen diplomacy initiative. Originally a part of the **NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES**, Sister Cities International became a separate, non-profit corporation in 1967, due to the tremendous growth and popularity of the US program. The organisation’s mission is to “promote peace through mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation -- one individual, one community at a time.”

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GREAT TRANSITION INITIATIVE is an international group working for a planetary civilisation rooted in solidarity, sustainability, and human well-being. The potential of a Great Transition is linked to the emergence of a **GLOBAL CITIZENS MOVEMENT (GCM)** to advocate for new values to underpin global society. GTI put forward The Widening Circle (TWC), a new organising effort to nourish the formation of a movement of global citizens. Rather than a rigid blueprint, TWC’s strategy envisions growing in successive waves, adapting to changing circumstances as it expands and diversifies. Its constants would lie in dedication to a vision of a just and sustainable global society; commitment to a politics of trust, tolerance, and mutual respect; and continual search for ways to balance pluralism and unity on the road to one world with many places.

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TIME BANKING is a moneyless alternative with a straightforward concept: one hour of help providing a good or service for another earns one time credit, which is exchangeable for an hour’s worth of help in return. The time banking movement has been 25 years in the making. Time banks have been used in a variety of contexts, for example: **the Time Dollar Youth Court** (a juvenile diversion program), **the National Homecomers Academy** (challenging recidivism and improving reintegration into society for ex-cons), and **CareBanks**

(a way of assuring health care for seniors). Edhar Cahn – the US-born inventor of time banking – believes that “as the market economy reveals its limits, time banking’s message has never been more powerful”.

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KEVIN KELLY ON THE AMISH APPROACH TO TECHNOLOGY: “Amish are living about fifty years behind us. Half of the inventions they use now were invented within the last 100 years. They don’t adopt everything new, but when they embrace it, it’s half a century after everyone else does. By that time, the benefits and costs are clear, the technology is stable, and it’s cheap. They are slow geeks”.

[WHAT TECHNOLOGY WANTS, 2012](#)

THE DIASPORA INVESTMENT IN AGRICULTURAL INITIATIVE was launched by the United Nations entity for supporting rural development and the US State Department. They help tap the resources of emigrant communities for investment in agriculture in their countries of origin. The Diaspora Investment in Agricultural Initiative will work with emigrants seeking investment in agricultural projects in their home communities, with a focus on post-conflict countries and



fragile states. The International Fund for Agricultural Development will work to involve migrant entrepreneurs, diaspora organisations, and key strategic entities to implement projects that stimulate the development of the agricultural sector.

UN AND US LAUNCH PLAN TO EMIGRANTS' RESOURCES TO BOOST AGRICULTURE, UNITED NATIONS NEWS CENTER

JAPAN'S YOUTH TURN TO RURAL AREAS SEEKING A SLOWER LIFE:

Many young Japanese Millennials cannot find a permanent job. Temporary workers now make up one third of the workforce, with a majority of young people. They never know when they will have to change jobs. These young people are turning to the country and learning about the rural life. In the countryside, local authorities are desperate to repopulate the rural agricultural areas, so they organise and pay the workers. "There are more people that want to be farmers now, and numbers are increasing." An example is Hitoshi Kajiya, a system engineer in Yokohama who decided to change and become a farmer. He is now an apprentice of Giichi Tanaka, an 86-year-old farmer who went to the farms right after coming back from World War II. "The work is slower paced and its really fulfilling...I know I will enjoy my life much more in touch with my community. Here you even talk to strangers, kids say hi. I think I will enjoy

the country life."

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TIME AS A NEW CURRENCY IN SPAIN:

The residents of the city of Málaga, on the country's southern Mediterranean coast just 130km from Africa, have set up an online site that allows them to earn money and buy products using a virtual currency.

The Catalan fishing town of Vilanova i la Geltrú has launched a similar experiment, but with a paper credit card of sorts. It implements a new currency worth slightly more than the euro when it is used at local stores. Started as a way of breaking with the global financial system, the alternative currency - named after a traditional wind instrument - has been embraced by only about 190 of the town's 67,000 residents. But organisers say more are signing up as the crisis deepens. Ton Dalmau, 57, one of the founders of the initiative, said the goal is to keep the money in circulation; to help, the bank where people keep their Turutas does not offer any interest. "This is a way for people who are on the fringes of the economy to participate again," said Josefina Altés, coordinator of the Spanish Time Bank Network.

In Spain, however, the economic crisis has been an impetus to move faster. There are now more than 325 time banks and alternative currency systems in Spain, involving tens of thousands of citizens. Collectively, these projects represent one of the largest experiments

in social money in modern times.

Peter North, a senior lecturer at the University of Liverpool, says the efforts in Spain may last longer because they are connected to the 15M, or indignados, movement. "Instead of just being a desperate way for people to survive a horrible economic crisis, this is part of the cooperatives, credit unions, community banks, organic farms, and recovering factories - the alternate economy - that the Occupy movement is groping towards," North said.

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CAUSE BRANDING: As the sheer number of media channels and advertisements has risen, it has become harder and harder to reach Millennials. Cause Branding has become an effective tool to reach and communicate with the millennial generation. It is a generation that is comprised of individuals who are extremely ambitious and not only have high expectations for themselves, but also for those around them, including their friends, families, communities, and brands. It is also a generation that has been shaped by tragic world events such as 9/11, and natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina. The result is a group that has developed a strong social conscience amplified by technology.

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